

Press Release

Maine State Planning Office

13 Communities Receive Land Use Planning Grants

Date: May 16, 2006

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Augusta ME – Thirteen Maine communities that hope to develop tools to help them with land use management got a boost from the state today. The State Planning Office awarded grants to help towns develop, update, or implement their local comprehensive plans.

The State Planning Office awarded three types of grants to the following municipalities:

Comprehensive Planning Grants

Bowerbank
Danforth
Detroit
Harrington
Livermore
South Thomaston
Vienna

Implementation Grants

Clifton
South Portland
Union

Comprehensive Plan Update Grants

Bar Harbor
Castine
Hermon

“No matter whether a town is experiencing rapid development or not, a comprehensive plan will help local officials and residents determine how they want their community to look in the future,” said Martha Freeman, Director of the State Planning Office. “It can help a municipality preserve working farms or natural areas. It can also help them guide growth to where public infrastructure already exists, rather than having to shoulder the expense of new roads and other services to accommodate development in outlying areas,” she said.

Seven towns received grants to develop their first comprehensive plan. The grants will help them inventory their natural, economic, and public assets and identify development and protection strategies to manage them. The State Planning Office works with the grant towns to provide data and to assist with developing a plan that is consistent with legislative goals.

Clifton, who has adopted a consistent comprehensive plan, now wants to implement it. “Clifton’s grant will help them create their first land use ordinance,” said Matt Nazar, Land Use Planning

Director at the State Planning Office.

“Not all implementation strategies are regulatory, however,” said Nazar. “We help communities develop non-regulatory strategies to accomplish their goals such as: voluntary land preservation agreements or downtown improvements to attract new growth.”

Lastly, three municipalities that already have consistent comprehensive plans in place received grants to update those plans. Many communities developed comprehensive plans in the late 1980s and 1990s and much has changed since then, not only in demographics and economics, but in the way we think about land use planning. Communities desire to incorporate new approaches into their plans such as protecting working forests and farmlands and managing vehicular access to busy city streets.

Since 1988, the state has given planning grants to 379 communities and over 250 towns have adopted comprehensive plans. A comprehensive plan allows a community to carefully plan for growth and minimize the negative impacts of development such as traffic congestion and water pollution.

The State Planning Office awards 10-15 grants annually in a competitive grant process. SPO received 17 grant applications, requesting \$214,477. Of those, it was able to fund \$174,977.



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